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ABSTRACT

A study identified competencies needed by secretarial and supervisory/managerial personnel in word processing (WP) environments and used the data collected to develop guidelines for a WP curriculum for two-year postsecondary institutions. Data on competencies, knowledge, and behavioral traits that individuals should possess to perform jobs in WP environments were gathered from 490 individuals actually performing secretarial and/or supervisory and managerial roles in the New York City area. To obtain these data, two separate procedures were used. The first consisted of two structured mailed questionnaires and the second involved the administration of two semi-structured observations and interviews to 100 personnel in the WP field. Statistical analysis of these data indicated that the three most important competencies to include in WP curricula are language arts, human relations, and electronic keyboarding. Included among these skills required by managers/supervisors are measuring productivity, developing potential of employees, designing and implementing work flow procedures, developing systems, and evaluating equipment. Based on these data a model WP curriculum was developed. It included the following courses: machine transcription, electronic keyboarding, introduction to WP office information systems, office supervision and management, WP office systems simulation and an integrative internship. (MN)

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# A STUDY OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND BUSINESS TRAINING PROCEDURES FOR WORD PROCESSING PERSONNEL WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR WORD PROCESSING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN TWO-YEAR POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

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The introduction of word processing equipment was the first major change in the office since the invention of the typewriter. This technology has impacted office systems; office designs; office productivity; and career opportunities for secretarial personnel training programs. In fact, the rate of growth of word processing (WP) has been so phenomenal that the office now is becoming an integrated information center that utilizes a high degree of sophisticated technology. Obviously, then, not only has the role of the secretary been altered, but many new positions have evolved. Curriculum developers must be aware of the structural and procedural changes in the office which necessitate new technical skills, attitudes different from those required in traditional secretarial positions, new knowledge qualifications, and higher-level decision-making and problem-making abilities. Therefore, curricula must be developed and revised to prepare students for career mobility in word processing environments as they exist not only today but tomorrow, too.

The purpose of this research was to identify the competencies required by secretarial and supervisory/managerial personnel for word processing positions and to develop a word processing curriculum guide for two-year postsecondary institutions.

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DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Data on competencies, knowledge, and behavioral traits that individuals should possess to perform satisfactorily on the job in WP environments were gathered from 490 individuals actually performing secretarial and/or supervisory and managerial roles. These individuals were employed in business and professional offices with WP installations located in New York City and Nassau and Westchester counties. To obtain these data, two separate procedures were used. The first procedure consisted of two structured questionnaires that were mailed to the entire sample of business and professional firms, one to be completed by correspondence and administrative secretaries and the other by supervisory/managerial personnel. The second procedure was the administration of two semi-structured interview-observation guides that were used in the observation and interview of 100 personnel in WP positions, including supervisors and managers. The data collected were subjected to basic descriptive statistical techniques. The information recorded on the instruments was summarized in tables showing frequency distributions and/or percentages.

Another source of data came from investigations of eleven company training programs. Classroom observations by the investigator were recorded on a Training Observation Guide and interviews with administrators were indicated on a Training-Interview Checklist. Further insight into instructional practices used in industry came from an examination of secretarial manuals and course outlines, when available. These data were tabulated to determine frequency distributions and percentages.

The final investigative procedure conducted by the researcher was an interview with seven chairpersons or representatives of two-year postsecondary institutions that offered WP instruction in degree-granting secretarial programs.

The research findings were incorporated in the development of a curriculum to prepare students for employment in WP positions.

## PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The most difficult aspect of this study was locating the appropriate offices. While the researcher's original intent was to study firms to be selected randomly on a proportionate basis from the three geographical divisions of New York City and Nassau and Westchester Counties on the basis of the size of firm and the Standard Industrial Classification code (SIC), it was found that this balanced selection was neither feasible nor representative of employment opportunities that existed.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the questionnaires, observations, and interviews identified competencies, knowledge, and attitudes for careers as WP correspondence and administrative secretaries, supervisors, and managers. Modern concepts of management were reflected in which a new emphasis had been placed on sophisticated electronic equipment, changing office procedures, and integrated systems to coordinate office routines and work flow; therefore, a primary conclusion of this study was a demonstrated need for WP curricula.

Of the six categories of the SIC, over 40 percent of secretarial and supervisory personnel were employed in service industries, with over 30 percent in manufacturing. There appeared to be a lack of uniformity in titles for positions with similar responsibilities.

### Summary of Major Findings

- WP installations ranged from small departments with fewer than five employees, excluding supervisors and managers, to large departments with over 40 personnel.
- Over one-third of the responses came from firms with 6 to 15 employees in WP positions, followed by 29 percent in companies with under five employees.

- Almost one-half of the secretaries and supervisors were employed in service industries.

- The most frequent job titles for secretaries who operated equipment were WP secretary and correspondence secretary and administrative secretary for employees in administrative roles. Half of the supervisor/manager (S/M) respondents were designated as WP supervisors. It should be noted that the number of supervisory/managerial positions within an organization depends on the size of WP installation and number of WP employees. In large firms, these positions may be separate while in smaller installations, the duties are combined into one position.

- The highest educational level achieved by 54.5 percent of the secretaries was completion of high school. However, 40 percent completed from one to four years of education beyond this level; 23 percent achieved either a two- or four-year degree.

- One-third of the S/M completed high school while 63 percent completed from one to four years of college. Of this number, forty-three percent had achieved either a two- or four-year degree. Interestingly, 66 percent continued their education through specialized seminars and workshops.

- Approximately one-half of the respondents reported that they had been employed for less than two years in their present positions.

- This was the first WP position for almost 50 percent of the 395 secretaries.

- More than one-third of the respondents indicated that males were employed in their departments.

- On-the-job training (at work station) was the most popular approach to instruction (73.9% for secretaries and 86% for S/M).

- The types of training most frequently offered by companies were on the operation of magnetic media typewriters (45%) and in language skills (43%). Almost half of the S/M had completed a course in human relations and over one-third in management theories.

- Three-quarters of the secretarial respondents indicated having contact with individuals outside their own departments and described a teamwork concept within their own positions.

- The majority of WP centers were established for the correspondence function only.

- Supervision of employees is generally routine (50%).

- The most frequent mode for giving instructions was orally, followed by handwritten directions.

- Longhand was the most frequent method of work origination, followed by typed rough draft and recorded dictation.

- Supervisory responsibilities indicated by approximately 70 percent of the respondents included: motivating personnel; planning, scheduling, and checking work; training personnel; evaluating quality and quantity; recommending promotion/salary increments, dismissal, and transfer; and designing procedures and systems.

- The educational level for WP secretarial positions that was reported as adequate by the S/M respondents is high school (68%); two years of college for supervisory positions (30%), and four years of college for managerial positions (42%).

  Criteria that may be used in the recruitment of personnel for both correspondence and administrative secretarial positions reflect the importance of language skills, flexibility, attitude, and typewriting skill.

- Approximately 41 percent of the respondents anticipated the design of new systems that would include telecommunications, telephone input dictation systems, communicating typewriters, and automated work measurement.

- Suggested topics to be incorporated in WP curricula are: keyboarding and text manipulation, machine dictation and transcription, human relations, oral and written communications, prioritizing, logging, time management, recordkeeping, and general office procedures for handling mail and scheduling appointments. Additional competencies to be included in curricula specifically required for S/M positions are personnel management and office administration.

- Eighty percent of the interviewees of company training programs indicated that the two-year institution should provide WP education.

Conclusions based on the findings indicated that WP is an expanding industry and career ladder positions for both sexes exist in the correspondence and administrative functions. According to management, some college education is necessary for upward mobility, and traditional secretarial employees need updating and specialized training.

Tasks are no longer routine but involve decision-making and problem-solving skills that are used in the design and coordination of a system of people, procedures, and equipment.

The three most important competencies to include in WP curricula are language arts, human relations, and electronic keyboarding. Correspondence secretaries need to develop extensive transcription skills; the ability to produce final copy from a variety of media, including longhand, rough draft, and recorded dictation; and the abilities to format, prioritize, log, maintain records, manage time, organize work, communicate orally, perform under stress, and work as part of a team. In multifunctional positions, secretaries also must be qualified to handle administrative procedures such as sorting and routing mail, recordkeeping, scheduling appointments, distributing work, composing, editing, delegating, and handling office routines that include the use of shorthand.

Supervisors/managers require skills different from those needed in traditional secretarial environments; for example, measuring productivity, developing potential of employees, designing and implementing work flow procedures, developing systems, evaluating equipment, and coping with the many structural and motivational complexities of technological work environments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations supporting these conclusions are: the creation of word processing curricula that include both general and specialized education that prepare students for initial job entry as well as for higher level supervisory/managerial positions; the development of occupational guidance systems for students; the organization of recruitment programs to attract male students into secretarial programs; instruction in supervisory/managerial skills that include technical, conceptual, decision-making, problem-solving, and human relations; instruction in data processing/computer concepts; the development

of certificate programs to serve the adult population; the creation of internship programs; the creation of advisory boards; and an on-going cooperative effort between educational institutions and industry.

## MODEL CURRICULUM

Below is a word processing curriculum that evolved from this study and includes the following courses: Machine Transcription, Electronic Keyboarding, Introduction to Word Processing Office Information Systems, Office Supervision and Management, Word Processing Office Systems Simulation, and an Integrative Internship.

Detailed job descriptions for each position studied and course outlines for each specialized course recommended to be included in WP curricula were developed as an outgrowth of this research. Job descriptions included data on duties, skills, and knowledge requirements and worker traits. Course outlines reflect general goals, specific objectives, content, equipment, materials, methodology, evaluation, and sequence of courses.